



The California Bicycle Helmet Safety Law requires all children under the age of 18 to wear an approved safety helmet when riding a bicycle on public streets or trails. The law also applies to bicycle passengers.

Violations

A violation of the law is an infraction with a maximum fine of \$25. However, first time offenses can be dismissed. Under the law, 72.5 percent of the revenues from the fines go to county health departments to be used for bicycle safety education and to help low-income families obtain helmets for their children.

Helmet Standards

Safety helmets must meet the standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM), or the Snell Memorial Foundation's Standard for Protective Headgear for Use in Bicycling, simply known as SNELL.

BICYCLE SAFETY and Helmets

Do I need a helmet?

In 2002, almost 300,000 children aged 14 and under were treated in emergency rooms for bicycle-related injuries. Bicycle helmet use by children ages 4 to 15 would prevent 39,000 to 45,000 head injuries, and 18,000 to 55,000 scalp and face injuries annually. Bicycle helmets are 85 to 88 percent effective in mitigating head and brain injuries. Wearing a helmet is the single most effective way to reduce head injuries and fatalities.

Do toddlers or young children need a helmet?

A child of any age needs head protection when riding. However, a small child's neck muscles may not be able to support the weight of a helmet. If you are in doubt, take the child and the helmet to a pediatrician for advice. If the helmet is too heavy, a child may simply be too young for bicycling. The helmet should cover as much of the child's head as possible, sit level on the head, and fit securely when the strap is fastened.

How does a helmet work?

A bicycle helmet reduces the peak energy in a sharp impact. This requires a layer of stiff foam to cushion the blow. The helmet must stay on the rider's head even though the rider may be hit more than once — usually by a car first, then the road. The helmet should not come off the head by any combination of pulling or twisting.

What type do I need?

Choose a helmet with a smooth plastic outer shell so it cannot snag on pavement or other objects in a crash. Avoid extensive vents since they provide less foam contact with the head in a crash, which could concentrate force on one point of the skull. Any attachments such as a mirror or visor should have break-away mounts, otherwise they may cause further injury.

What safety standards should I look for in a helmet?

Look for a standards sticker inside the helmet. All safety helmets sold in California must meet the standards of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM), or the Snell Memorial Foundation's Standard for Protective Headgear for Use in Bicycling, known simply as SNELL. According to safety groups, the best helmet today which provides the greatest coverage and protection carries the Snell B-95 sticker. If you use any add-on accessories you should examine them carefully and consider what they might do to you in a crash.

How much does a typical helmet cost?

Helmets are available in bicycle shops and other retailers starting at about \$20; they can be found in some discount stores for as little as \$10, and in thrift stores for even less. However, a range of prices exists, depending on the style and materials used. Some helmets can cost up to \$120.

What should I look for when I buy a helmet?

Look for the safety standards sticker. Choose a bright color on the outside. Put it on, adjust the straps, and then try to tear it off. A good fit should

remain level on the head and not tilt more than one inch or two in any direction, which ensures that the helmet will be in place if a crash occurs. Look for vents and sweat control devices. Inspect the strap buckle for long-term durability. A rating of bicycle helmets offered by various manufacturers is provided in a June 2006 article in *Consumers Reports*. You can read part of the report at www.consumerreports.org/cro/travel/bike-helmets-606/ratings/latest-ratings.htm



When must I replace a helmet?

Replace any helmet that has been in a crash. Impact crushes some of the foam and it can no longer protect your head if it is hit again. Replace the strap buckle if it cracks or a piece breaks off. Most manufacturers recommend helmet replacement after five years.

How do I get my child to wear his/her helmet?

Let your child pick out the helmet. Help your child learn to use the buckle. Help your child practice until he or she can buckle them easily. Insist your child always wears the helmet when riding. Firm rules are usually needed for any safety practice. When you ride together, wear your own helmet. Your own good example can make a big difference in encouraging your child to wear one. Praise and reward your child each time. You can take away some of the discomfort of wearing a helmet with words of support. Begin the helmet habit with the first bicycle. It will then become a natural habit as your child grows. Encourage other parents to buy helmets.



California State Assembly

SALLY J. LIEBER

ASSEMBLYWOMAN, 22ND DISTRICT

Dear Friend:

The risk of being injured while bicycle riding is always present. According to safety experts, four out of five bicycle accidents involve an injury to the head. Children especially are very susceptible to bicycle-related accidents. One study found that approximately 540,000 bicyclists visit emergency rooms with injuries each year. Of those, about 67,000 have head injuries, and 27,000 have injuries enough to be hospitalized. A very high percentage of cyclists' brain injuries can be prevented by a helmet, estimated at anywhere from 45 to 88 percent.

To increase the use of helmets, the Legislature has passed several helmet laws. The first bicycle helmet law was passed in 1986 and became effective in 1987. This law was amended in 1994 to cover anyone under the age of 18.

This brochure was put together to inform you of the law and to provide you with information regarding helmets and their proper use. If you have any questions regarding California's helmet safety law, or if I can be of help on any matter, please call.

Sincerely,

Sally J. Lieber
Assemblywoman, 22th District



Courtesy of Assemblywoman

Sally J. Lieber

CAPITOL OFFICE:

P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0022
(916) 319-2022
Fax: (916) 319-2122

DISTRICT OFFICE:

274 Castro Street, Suite 202
Mountain View, CA 94041
Phone: (408) 277-2003
Fax: (408) 277-2084

E-MAIL:

assemblymember.lieber@assembly.
ca.gov

22ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT WEB SITE:

[http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/
members/a22](http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a22)

ASSEMBLY WEB SITE:

www.assembly.ca.gov

REV. 5/06

*"The first automobile crash
in the United States
occurred in New York City
in 1896, when a motor
vehicle collided with a
pedalcycle rider.*

(Famous First Facts, by Joseph Kane)."

BICYCLE *Safety*

California's Bicycle Helmet Safety Law



*Keep your head in a safe place
Wear a Helmet.*